

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01
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R 251855Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2140
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
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AMEMBASSY LISBON
USMISSION USNATO
DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 16760

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE CENTER-LEFT CHALLENGE: REUNIFICATION OF
FRENCH RADICALS BEHIND CHABAN-DELMAS?

REF: PARIS 16405
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SUMMARY. A FACTION OF THE LEFT RADICAL PARTY (MRG),
UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF ITS NEW
PRESIDENT MICHEL CREPEAU, HAS BEGUN AN EFFORT TO REUNITE
FRENCH RADICALISM (CURRENTLY SPLIT BETWEEN THE RADICAL
SOCIALISTS IN GISCARD'S MAJORITY AND THE MRG IN THE
OPPOSITION) AND ULTIMATELY TO GIVE IT A ROLE IN GIS-

CARD'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY OF CREATING A CENTER-LEFT POLITICAL GROUPING. ALTHOUGH TECHNICALLY REMAINING WITHIN THE MRG, RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS HEADED BY GUY GENNESSEAUX AND PIERRE BRACQUE HAVE CREATED A "CLUB OF REFLEXION" WHOSE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IS TO REUNITE A LARGE PART OF THE RADICAL FAMILY UNDER THE AUSPICES OF JACQUES CHABAN-DELMAS. THE IMMEDIATE GOAL IS THE ORGANIZATION OF REUNIFICATION CONGRESS IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER WHICH WOULD WITNESS THE BIRTH OF A POLITICAL FORCE WHOSE TIME WOULD COME IN THE "POST-BARRE" PERIOD, PRESUMABLY AFTER 1981. END SUMMARY.

1. "CLUB OF REFLEXION": THE MRG CONGRESS ENDED MAY 21 WITH ALL ELEMENTS PLEDGING CONTINUED ALLEGIANCE TO THE PARTY. ON MAY 22, MONEYPAN MANUEL DIAZ REFUSED TO RENEW THE LEASE ON MRG HEADQUARTERS FOR NEWLY-ELECTED PRESIDENT MICHEL CREPEAU AND TURNED THE OFFICES OVER TO A "CLUB OF REFLEXION" HEADED BY GUY GENNESSEAUX AND PIERRE BRACQUE (BOTH STRONG SUPPORTERS OF ROBERT FABRE). ALTHOUGH THE "CLUB" REMAINS TECHNICALLY WITHIN THE MRG, ITS AVOWED PURPOSE IS "TO RALLY ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN RADICALISM," A RADICALISM WHICH IS CLEARLY NOT THAT OF MICHEL CREPEAU.

2. CONGRESS OF REUNIFICATION: PRIVATELY, GENNESSEAUX HAS DESCRIBED A MUCH MORE AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING WHOSE CONFIDENTIAL

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ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO CREATE A NEW CENTER-LEFT POLITICAL FORCE, HOPEFULLY HEADED BY JACQUES CHABAN-DELMAS. THIS OPERATION WILL BE LAUNCHED IN LATE SUMMER WHEN A "CHARTER OF RADICALISM" WILL BE CIRCULATED FOR SIGNATURE (ONLY ON THE CONDITION THAT ADVANCE COMMITMENTS PROMISE ITS SUCCESS), LEADING TO A REUNIFICATION CONGRESS OF RADICALISM IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER. GENNESSEAUX CLAIMS THAT A GOOD PORTION RADICAL SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP AND DEPUTIES ARE ALREADY AGREED, AS IS THE ONLY RADICAL CABINET MEMBER, SECRETARY OF STATE JEAN-PIERRE PROUTEAU. OTHER SUPPORTERS INCLUDE ROBERT FABRE (WHO WILL REMAIN COMPLETELY BEHIND THE SCENES UNTIL SEPTEMBER), SENATOR HENRI CAILLAVET AND ANDRE ROSSI. AS FOR THE MRG, GENNESSEAUX BELIEVES ABOUT 30 PERCENT WOULD COME ALONG IN THE FIRST STAGES.

3. THE CHABAN FACTOR: THE POLITICAL ORIENTATION WOULD BE CENTER-LEFT WITH NO INTENTION TO ENTER THE GOVERNING COALITION UNTIL "AFTER BARRE", PERHAPS AFTER A GISCARD VICTORY IN THE 1981 PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST WHEN NEW LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO RETURN A TRUE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY. THE ORGANIZATION WOULD OF COURSE

SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT UNTIL THAT TIME. MUCH OBVIOUSLY
DEPENDS ON THE AGREEMENT OF CHABAN-DELMAS, WHO IS APPAR-
ENTLY AWARE OF THE PROJECT BUT NOT YET COMMITTED. WITH
CHABAN ON BOARD, THE STOCK OF THE OPERATION WOULD SOAR
AND COULD EVEN BRING ALONG JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER
IN THE MOST OPTIMISTIC SCENARIO. NO OTHER LEADER --
FABRE OR ROSSI -- COULD HOPE TO INDUCE JJSS' PARTICIPA-
TION.

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4. COMMENT: THE STRATEGY OUTLINED BY GENNESSEAU FITS
WITH GISCARD'S PLANS FOR AN INITIAL, LIMITED "OPENING"
TOWARD THE LEFT. AS FOR CHABAN, ALTHOUGH A LONG-TIME
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GAULLIST, HE IS CONSIDERED SYMPATHETIC TO MANY OF THE
RADICALS' HISTORICAL TRADITIONS WHICH ARE ESPECIALLY
STRONG IN HIS SOUTHWEST CORNER OF FRANCE. MOREOVER,
CHABAN VIEWS HIS PRESENT ROLE AS PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEM-
BLY AS A LINK BETWEEN BOTH SIDES OF THE POLITICAL EQUA-
TION. THE ELYSEE IS NO DOUBT MUCH INVOLVED IN THE CUR-
RENT MANEUVERING AS IT OFFERS A FIRST CHANCE TO LAUNCH A
REAL BEACH-HEAD INTO LEFT TERRITORY. SUCH INTEREST IS
WELL CAMOUFLAGED, HOWEVER, BY LEAVING THE INITIATIVE
OSTENSIBLY IN THE HANDS OF DISSATISFIED MRG LEADERS;
GENNESSEAU AND BRACQUE WILL REMAIN LEFT RADICALS, UN-
LESS EXCLUDED (AS THEY HOPE) BY CREPEAU. LIKEWISE, THE
LONG-TERM ASPECT OF THE PROJECT MAKES SENSE -- THE CEN-
TER-LEFT IMAGE WILL BE REINFORCED TO THE EXTENT THAT
ORGANIZERS ARE NOT RUNNING AFTER GOVERNMENT PORTFOLIOS.
ALTHOUGH WE HAVE ONLY THE INITIAL OUTLINES, THE WHOLE
PROPOSITION IS ONE WORTH WATCHING AS PERHAPS THE FIRST
CONCRETE POLITICAL MOVE IN GISCARD'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY.
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